

No 5

An
Inaugural Dissertation
on
Pantherides

by
Anthony Kerassey

Kerassey

Dated March 27th 1824
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A Dissertation On Canthanides

The natural history, appearance, qualities of these insects, and the manner of preparing them for medical use, with their application and utility in diseases, will constitute the subject of this Essay.

They are an insect of the better kind of the genus Cantharis, having a longish body, with a lively tinge of blue and green, interspersed with a golden hue and are found in Spain, Italy, France and most of the other countries of Europe, in large swarms, destroying the foliage of different kinds of trees, from which they are taken into cloths, of them numerous are exposed to the fumes of Bengal, and carefully dried either in the sun, or at stove. There are several

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species of them, but the one held in the high-
est esteem, is the Nobo Vesicatorius or Lytta
vesicatoria, though the others are not want, es-
pecially the species found in this country, the
caantharis vittata or Lytta vittata, or potato
fly being chiefly found on that vegetable. It is
an insect of the same conformation as the above
described, but smaller and of a different colour
consisting of red black & yellow variously
distributed, but possessing the same properties
& applicable to the same disease.

From the analysis hitherto made of
Caantharides, they appear to consist of alcoholic
and watery extract, few acetic acid, phos-
phate of magnesia, a reddish yellow oil
soluble in alcohol, wine acid, and a precip-
itate crystalline substance soluble in warm
alcohol but separating when cold, and insol-
uble in water. It may be prepared accord-
ing to Dr Thomson in the following manner;

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Boil them in water, till every thing soluble
in that liquid is taken up, concentrate this
solution by evaporation to the consistence of a
thick syrup; then boil it repeatedly in Alco-
hol, till it ceases to act on it; evaporate gently
the alcohol solution to dryness, and put this
dry residue in a phial with Sulphuric Ether;
agitate the mixture, till the Ether acts upon it,
when it assumes a yellow colour. Decant it
off and let it evaporate in the open air. It
deposits in small crystalline plates mixed
with a yellow matter. This yellow matter is
taken up by alcohol, which leaves the crystalline
plates. These plates are dried between blotting
paper & is the substance which Dr Thomson
calls cantharidin, but agreeably to my opinion
true cantharis would be more proper. The
substance thus obtained is in small shining
plates, insoluble in water & cold alcohol, but
dissolves in warm alcohol.

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on cooling parts with it. Oils act on it very
readily. It associates with great energy & appears
to constitute the active principle of this Oil.
Having thus detailed in a summary man-
ner, the history, analysis &c of earth acids
I proceed to the consideration of their sensible
Properties & effects upon the system, these
Modus Operandi I use in the management
of diseases. They have a peculiar nauseous
smell, and a very acid burning taste.,,
Taken internally, they often cause ^{to} haemato-
nia, attended with very great pain & in more
considerable doses inflame & ulcerate the
intestinal canal; ^{they} induce purulent disches-
es often take place; the breath is fetid &
cadaverous; intense pain in the abdomen
followed by syncope & delirium
& finally death.

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flamm & afterwards dissecate the parts, pro-

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ducing an effusion of serum if long continued
gangrene. Even their application in this man-
ner is often attended by strangury, with some
degree of fever & thirst. The bowel seems to
be a fortuitous circumstance, as it is produced
by other substances as the lanum nigrum, cam-
phor opium &c, but in what manner they pro-
duce this effect is not yet fully determined.
By some it is ascribed to the absorption of their
acid articles into the circulation & thus acting
through the medium of the blood; & by others
to sympathy. But this difference of opinion
leads to no difference in the treatment of such
cases, the inconveniences being generally reme-
died by drinking bland & emollient liquids as
milk & the different emulsions. The disagree-
ment that exists as to their modus operandi, is not
as relates to their stimulant & evacuant prop-
erties, for it is more generally believed to be by
a peculiar stimulation which appears to be of

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a cordial & invigorating nature; but how
that stimulating is imparted to the system, whether
by sympathy or through the medium of
absorption, is not as yet determined. But in a
practical view of the subject, it is not so impor-
tant, to know the medium through which this
is effected, as to keep steadily in view, that prin-
ciple which is laid down as regards the living
body, that by exciting a new & different impinge-
ment, an existing morbid one may be removed.
and it is on this principle that they produce
their beneficial effects in the cure of disease.
Admitting the principle to be correct, in rela-
tion to the article under consideration, it re-
quires great discrimination & judgment in
its application, which is only to be acquired
by careful observation & just deductions thence-
from, aided by the experience of others.
Before proceeding to their application in
the cure of disease, it may be necessary

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to premise something of the rules laid down
for their employment, as a vesicatory.

The Blister should remain on till it blisters,
which is generally from 8 to 12 hours, though in
children & those of delicate skin a much short-
er time is sufficient; but on the head, double
that time; and it is a curious fact, that by re-
moving the pain from the part previous to its
being applied, if the case will admit, strangu-
lary will be prevented, but is necessary not to
continue it too long, or gangrene may be in-
duced. In local affections and all the phlegma-
tiae, we are directed to apply the blister of soft-
leather the seat of the disease, & as large as
the nature of the part will allow, In persons
 liable to strangury, or where much pain is
 excited, the blister is to be removed after 2
 or 3 hours, of the part bathed with a mixture
 of Olive oil, or lard, & Lanacane, and re-
 apply it. If this does not succeed, an emol-

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heit poultice is to be substituted which
will calm irritation & produce well filled
vesicles. To prevent it so away, ~~the use~~ of steam
gargle, the fumous of violent Ulcers is pre-
scribed as Flaproot tea, Earley water &c. and
in violent cases, fomentations to the pubic
warm bath. O quam &c. In diseases of high
action the system must be reduced by N.
and the other means of depletion, or they
aggravate rather than remove the disease.
Blistering when applied in the more advanced
stages of disease, from the want of ten-
perature & fulness of action do not draw,
or else very imperfectly when applied to
the extreme parts of the body. It is therefore
in such cases best to put them on the least
parts &c. In adjusting a blister we must be
careful to secure it from slipping by bar-
clays & adhesion strips & in low states of the
system if its drawing is doubtful, friction

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with temperature, or a purpura may be applied. The dressings most usually applied are simple crepe, or lace on them or wadded cabbage leaves; & to keep it open, Savin or other stimulating ointments.

Having advanced thus far in my enquiry, I shall now proceed to consider them in their most interesting relation, as means of combatting diseases which doubtless in many instances, without their aid would terminate the life of the unhappy sufferer! Beginning with the febrile diseases, in all of which they are more or less useful, intermittent fever first presents itself. Though the remedy in this disease is not generally employed, yet there are cases in which no doubt exists as to its utility. As a prevention of the paroxysms, ^{Vapours} so that this impression may be felt at the moment of accession, we have numerous at-

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tivation & by their constant application to
the extremities the train of morbid associa-
tion has by the irritation thus produced
been completely subverted. But it is in ob-
stinate cases those attended by visceral
congestion & inflammatory indurations
that their best effects are observed. Accord-
ing to Dr RUSH in all those cases of arterial
intermittent whether quotidian, quartan
or tertian where the bark does not succeed
after 3 or 4 days trial, a blister to the wrist
sulcous jail. Their property in contein-
ing fev'rer is still more questioned. By some
writing they are altogether condemned
among whom is Dr Hordy who conceives
that instead of mitigating or arresting the
disease in any manner, they prove an
accessory cause, by the irritation they pro-
duce; while others hold a more qualified
if not directly opposite sentiment.

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This discrepancy of opinion seems to be owing to the circumstance of their being applied in two different stages of the complaint, the early & more advanced. For according to professor Chapman nothing can be more opposite than their effects in these two stages; in the first invariably doing harm while there is much arterial action & growing but
especially in properly reduced state of the system, the fangs under consideration being generally of a bilious inflammatory nature except in winter when it mostly parts on the lining of Sephus. The practice which naturally arises from this view of the case of disease in question, & which is sanctioned by the last mentioned authority, and the general practice is to resort to Fasting in the former of these cases, after thorough evacuation of the alimentary canal & reduction of the arterial system, & more especially of, perking towards typhus

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or has assumed the typhoid form. Taught
from the nature of Yellow Fevers, as revealed
by dissection as well as the symptoms, that it is
a highly gaseous affection, our remedy is resorted
to earthing with much advantage. They are com-
mended to be applied to the region of the
stomach. Deducing the practice from the
pathology, we are directed in Syphilis from
which is considered as a cerebral affection, in
conjunction with other means of obviating con-
gestion & inflammation in that organ, to apply
a blister to the whole cranium. What would be
the result of their application to the spine as
has been proposed, appears not to have been de-
cided by experiment but judging from its con-
nection with the brain & influence over the cere-
bral economy, there is reason to think they might
prove of great advantage.

Having briefly considered their use in
fever, the application of them to the order of

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Phlegmatics, must engage attention, in all
of which they are employed with great safety,
In all the acute pneumonie cases, after arti-
cial respiration, they are resorted to with ad-
vantage, & are to be applied over the imme-
diate seat of the disease, yet there are not want-
ing those who deny their usefulness, but the weight
of authority inclines to an opposite belief, though
in inflammation occurring in debilitated subjects,
Pneumonia Notha of the aged, they are usu-
ally resorted to without previous despatch. To
the various affections, particularly by mucous
Tonsillitis, Strachitis, after the preliminary meas-
ures above indicated, they are well suited, also
in inflammatory affections of the Digestive appa-
ratus, most especially Gastritis & proctositis. Es-
pecially, being as we are told, next in efficacy to U.S.
The same may be said in respect to Reputing
splenitis & other visceral inflammations. All
authorities agree as to their safety in Rheuma-

time, when
topical bleed-
ing shows, m-
uch less impor-
tant to the pa-
tient, I would
recommend Dr.
H. C. Allen,
as a very good
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I will also ad-
dress Dr. John
F. G. Jackson,
as a surgeon who
has done much

to invite Dr.
Allen by appo-

intion, recom-
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lesions, when applied after general & suppulsive
topical bleeding, though big in the chronic form
they show most distinctly their power, especially
when suppuration is induced. Their applica-
tion to the part in regular Eczæt, has been recom-
mended. Judging from analogous, the inference
would seem favourable, but we are taught the
contrary. It has been alleged that they re-
pel the disease to parts more important to
life, but for this assertion there appears to be
no foundation; by Pippard Chapman it is ut-
terly denied, he considering them as one of the
best means in its singular & retrocedent forms
to invite & hasten ~~the~~ it down on the attenu-
ating by applying them to those parts; & he like-
wise recommends when it attacks the alimen-
tary canal, hung them, brained, to apply them
over the seat of the complaint. In inflamma-
tions & congestions of the brain they are particu-
larly indicated especially in Hematia in which

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they exercise decided power. Of applying the
same, may be advanced, though there is some
diversity of opinion as respects the parts to which
they are to be applied, whether the head or
the extremities; but the preponderance is in favour
of the former position. In paroxysms, the affected
part having lost ^{its} susceptibility to impression, their
application to the seat of the disease would be near-
ly ineffectual; but advantage is derived from them
in other situations, as the back of the neck &c. They are likewise a principal part in the treat-
ment of Hydrocephalus, proving most useful when
suppuration is induced. Not less are they used
in local inflammatory affections, particularly
inflamed joints &c. being by Professor Physick, con-
sidered an invaluable remedy; also Culicis & man-
mary swelling. The practice introduced by Dr
Hopper of this city in treating malignant erysipelas
by fomentations, of which is attended by such signal
benefit, has from analogy been extended by

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professor Physicks to the management of Gangrene
with almost complete success. Of the utility of this
remedy in most of the diseases of the order Pro-
fluviat, we have the concurrent testimony of most
of the writers on the subject. Of the one which most
fascinately strikes the attention is Dysentery, though
the propriety of thus locating it, is questioned, espe-
cially when it assumes the inflammatory type.
That being placed in this order *Phlegmatis* is
but whether it belongs to one or the other, blistering
comes in with manifest advantage, after the
preliminary measures for reducing vascular
excitement; they are thought to be of most service
when applied to the abdomen. They are also per-
missible in cholera Morbus when applied to the
stomach & chills & irritability, & in a exhausted state
of the system to the extremities. Diarrhea when
protracted is well managed by blisters being
alternately applied to the ankles & wrists -
To some of the cases of Hemorrhage this practice

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Has been applied with success. Likewise in many
of the heart diseases, especially to sustain the system
in typhoid & confluent small pox, & when the con-
ting needs to reach them to the surface. Of the
numerous spasmodic affections, I shall only men-
tion a few of the most prominent. In Opisthotis
caused by a morbid condition of the brain, they
fail in common with the other modes of practice
but in that form which is dependent on a certain
mobility of the system. In Ulcerous stomach, recur-
ring periodically, they sometimes by being applied
occasionally to the sternum, afford relief. Many are
also recorded of their utility in tetany by applying
them to the spine. The chest is the seat of many af-
fections of this nature, which are not reciprocally
benefitted by our remedy as Aethere perfumed
& Augura pectoris. There are also other diseases
of the chest of a different nature from the pre-
siding in which they are still more employed as
in pulmonary consumption, where any inflam-

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Mutatory action is by joining them with other means
of reducing vascular excitement, but in the suppuration
stage they are considered nugatory if not mischievous.
Their efficacy in Hydrocephalus is still better
established, it being generally of an inflammatory
nature, so as to dry & anaesthetize them is some evi-
dence of their utility, but their general employment
is considered Hazardous, frequently in the latter
case inducing gangrene.

Having in a cursory manner considered their
application of utility as vibratory, in a variety
of diseases to which Humanity is subject, I shall
in concluding this inquiry briefly notice their
internal administration in a few diseases in
which they are thought serviceable. In respect
of a species of low action they are principally used.
In the former they are given till the agency is in-
duced at which point the complaint generally
gives way; also in incontinence of urine they
have been recommended. They are exhibited

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either in substance or Tincture, the dose of the
former being from 1 to 2 or 3 grains. & of the latter
from 20 to 30 drops.

Wat. Mea